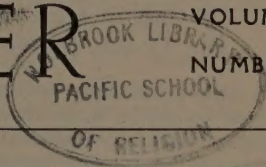


SPRING, 1955

**SPECIAL NUMBER****THE LOCAL CHURCH: ITS HISTORY AND ITS HISTORIAN**

A more significant history of a community is more often found in the records of its churches than in its official annals. And yet, in how many cases the churches of our fellowship have neglected to keep adequate records, even though in many cases the beginnings of the community centered in the church. And often when such records have been written they have been lost later through carelessness, or by fire or flood.

For long years our fellowship has been deeply concerned with plans for social amelioration and the religious needs of our own country and of foreign lands. But the records of the local churches and of the lives and services of men and women who have made these churches what they are today too often have not been preserved for present guidance. Without history all life loses its perspective or depth of meaning. An awareness of the church's past can give instruction and encouragement for today. In times like these, individuals and institutions should lay hands on every available source of strength and understanding.

This Society is dedicated to the task of assisting every church in collecting as much of its historical material as can yet be found, appraising it for present values, bringing the lessons of the past forward for present use, and providing safekeeping of these evidences of the church's life and work for future use.

The Local Church Historian

Thoughts similar to those expressed above have been running hither and yon through our fellowship for some years, for there has been a noteworthy development of interest in the history of our churches on every level; local church, state conference and national agency. In the local church this growing interest is marked by the growth of the number of classes and groups gathered for historical study, the widening observance of church anniversaries and by the appointment of an historian for the local church with certain specified duties and responsibilities. The office of historian in the local church has now become official. The General Council's annual report for Year Book use provides that the church report the name and address of its church historian. These names are being assembled by state registrars and will be added to the Society's rapidly growing list of local church historians. There is building up in the office of the Society a far-ranging correspondence with these church historians. From pastors and church historians have come many questions. After consultation and study we have formulated, in brief, answers to some of these questions, on page three.

F. L. F.

THE N. Y. CONFERENCE PROJECT

J. CHESTER MOLYNEUX, Clerk
First Church, Jamestown, N. Y.

A history collecting project is being carried forward by the N. Y. Conference. This project resulted from the consideration of three characteristics of present-day church life:

First. The rapid turnover of church membership, due in part to uneasy industry and easy transportation. Our churches lose about 6½% of their members annually and receive on the average about 8% of their membership as new members. There is a possible 50% turnover in church membership each ten years.

If the church is to keep alive, a constant study by the membership, and especially by its new members, of its own history is a necessity. Also, each individual needs to know the general outline of the history of our fellowship.

Central in this State Conference program is the collecting and safeguarding by each church of its own historical records. The time for the collection of these materials is now and cannot be tomorrow.

Second. Ours are "gathered" churches. In a recent class of 14 new members in the writer's church, three came from the great mother churches of Greece, Rome and England. Four had other backgrounds. Only two were Congregationalists. Of the church cabinet of 14, only one grew up in a Congregational home. And these were the church's leaders! This condition emphasizes our need.

Third. We take too much for granted about our members' historical literacy. On a recent "Laymen's Sunday," two of us shared the sermon time to tell of Congregational backgrounds. Later, some prominent members confessed they knew practically nothing about our heritage. So, in an effort to meet these conditions, we embarked upon the history collecting project that our members understand their own local history. We have found that collecting its historical records is one of the best ways to arouse interest in local church history. Planned interviews with long-time members can develop colorful stories. Old pictures and other remembrances come out of long hiding. Of course, this is not all there is to history-assembly, but it is a start of the right sort. The Congregational story is far from a dull one and personal accounts give it interest.

The N. Y. Conference asked us to extend this project and we sent a mimeographed circular letter to all ministers and clerks, outlining

aims and asking that the enclosed questionnaire be filled out and returned.* Not much was expected from this modest beginning. But to our surprise, a third of the State's churches returned the completed questionnaire. Following correspondence brought in a substantial number of histories, and more continue to arrive. In addition, several churches have been encouraged to assemble their histories for the first time. The response is encouraging and indicates definite latent interest. Compensations for history collectors will be many. Is not history-preserving token payment toward our vast debts to the past and the future? This plan is recommended to other State Conferences.

MR. J. CHESTER MOLYNEUX

Mr. Molyneux's plan for collecting and safeguarding local church records as being developed in the New York Conference is worthy of careful study. Widespread interest has been aroused. Twenty-six historians of N. Y. churches have been enrolled since November (we now have a total of 118). Thirty-two histories of N. Y. churches have been collected since November and after indexing have been put in safekeeping. Mr. Molyneux has the enthusiasm of a true pioneer and he is giving outstanding help to the local church phase of the Society program.

F. L.

SAFEGUARDING YOUR FUTURE

Will your church 50 years hence be writing letters like these?

"Can your Society help us? During the history of this church there have been two fires, one of the parsonage, when some of the records were destroyed and another the home of the Church Clerk, when many more of the records were destroyed." — *Illinois, pastor.*

"We have the names of the twenty-one pastors since 1854, but of sixteen only the names and date. Can your office secure information on these, as our records have been lost?"

— *Minnesota, pastor.*

"Our church needs help in preparing its 75th anniversary. We have excellent records for first ten years but all records for the next fifteen years were destroyed when our church burned." — *Iowa, pastor.*

*Note: Sample of the above-mentioned questionnaire sent on request.

Note to Pastors: Additional copies of this Newsletter may be had free on request.

QUESTIONS FROM LOCAL CHURCH HISTORIANS

How are local church historians elected?

Usually by the church at annual meeting or appointed by church committee.

Is the work of church historian part of the duty of church clerk?

Not necessarily, though it may be. Usually, however, the clerk has much work to do to keep records of membership, church meetings, etc., and it is advisable to elect a different person as historian. There should be, however, the closest cooperation between these two officials.

What are some of the first duties?

An inventory should first be made of the available church records:

- a) When, where, by whom the church was organized.
- b) The church building date, history, and general information.
- c) A list of all pastors should be made with information concerning their education, ordination, pastorates, with photo.
Note: In compiling a list of your pastors, the Society will gladly search records for needed information, if names and approximate dates are furnished.
- d) Also information on ministers and missionaries who have gone from the church.
- e) A list of church officials: deacons, deaconesses, trustees, superintendents of Church School, with dates of service.

Where find needed information?

A "big hunt" should be organized all through the church and in attics, storerooms, old trunks of long-time homes, for missing information. This hunt should be repeated from time to time.

What records are of historical value?

Church reports, copies of church bulletin,ippings and programs. A careful plan should be worked out by the historian and the clerk, that past records should be put in a safe depository with notice to the Society of what and where kept. An attempt should be made to replace lost records as far as possible from the memory of persons still living, and to correct errors in present records.

What other items have historical interest?

Books, heirlooms, pictures, church furnishings. Churches are beginning to find value in historical exhibits. A glass case can be installed

for the display of attractive old books, pictures and heirlooms of real historical value, properly labeled, and in this way the church can establish better ties with its own past.

7. What anniversaries are usually celebrated?

The historian should begin well in advance to assist the pastor to develop a plan for the church anniversary, usually of a 25-year period, e.g., 25, 50, 75, 100, etc. After 25 years approximately 40% of the members of the church will be "newcomers" and these will greatly benefit by anniversary programs as will the community at large. (Write the Society office for material for an anniversary, and for copies of church anniversary programs and pageants.)

Quite a few churches celebrate an annual birthday or home-coming with appropriate morning services or afternoon tea with historical talks and social features. Forefathers' Day, Thanksgiving, Fast Day, and Charter Day may be observed with fitting programs.

8. What should historians report?

An annual report, usually a brief summary of the year's work, is valuable to circulate among the members and former members near and far, and copies sent to the state conference office and filed for the permanent record of the church. The reports year by year of the historians of the early New England churches are valuable portions of our inheritance.

"MAYFLOWER" GOODWILL MISSION

A group of Britons have raised \$300,000 to build and outfit a *New Mayflower*, which is to sail from Plymouth, England, September 16, 1956 (anniversary day), for America, bringing a company of twenty Britons on a goodwill mission. Ambassador Winthrop W. Aldrich, *Mayflower* descendant, and many leading Britons are backing the mission. Lively interest in this project is being manifested in New England.

MINES OF CHURCH HISTORY

As my experience with the churches widens I am more and more impressed with the vast mines of church history now hidden in church clerks' records and town histories.

PERCY C. LADD, Burlington, Vt.

A CORRECTION

Our thanks to Col. Frederic Gilbert Bauer for his statement that by act of Congress "The Civil War" is the official name rather than The War between the States as used in our last *News Letter*, for which the editor was responsible.

POLITICS AND HISTORY

One characteristic of our society is its impatience with history. As the most dynamic and highly powered civilization in the world today, we tend to be indifferent to the past, or at least to lack sympathy for it. We are quick to move, to act, to improve, to experiment, to build up, to tear down. We rarely stop to look back.

This is a grave national shortcoming, containing elements of danger to our civilization. For without a knowledge of history there can be no meaningful discussion of public issues. Every problem, whether it be in the realm of foreign affairs or domestic politics, has roots in the past. To try to understand public affairs, without knowing their background, is like driving through heavy traffic blindfolded; not knowing where we come from, we can hardly be expected to know where we are going.

In politics particularly history has many uses. For one thing, a knowledge of history helps the attempt to eliminate or reduce a repetition of past mistakes. As Santayana so wisely said, "Those who ignore history are doomed to relive it." For another, the past gives us perspective; a knowledge of it serves pretty much the same purpose as does human memory. History may not be an infallible guide, any more than is human memory, but we cannot do without it if we wish to have intellectual poise and perspective. With history on our side we are helped to live without futile despair and without undue optimism. This perhaps is the essence of wisdom.

Finally, history is all around us. Whether we know it or not, we are the products, benefactors or victims of the past. George Washington is still behind the American principle of the supremacy of civilian over military authority. James Madison's constitutional philosophy still permeates every Supreme Court decision. The spirit of Thomas Jefferson pervades our whole democratic philosophy. We can no more escape them, as citizens, than we can escape our personal remembrances, as human beings.

SAUL K. PADOVER

New School Bulletin (by permission)

A WORD FOR TODAY

Cicero's advice to historians:

"The first law is that the historian shall never dare to set down what is false; the second, that he shall never dare to conceal the truth; the third, that there shall be no suspicion in his work of either favoritism or prejudice."

Quoted by EDWARD R. MURROW

WORTH REPEATING

"He who penetrates the depths must sooner or later discover that the most impressive thing in America is her Christianity. The good in this country would never have come into being without the blessing and power of Jesus Christ."

CHARLES MALIK of Lebanon

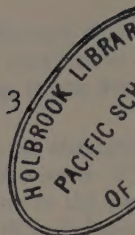
Note. This News Letter may be mailed to your friend. Write name and address below — stamp. Additional copies free on request.

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arthur H. Bradford, President Frederick L. Fagley, Secretary John A. Harrer, Treasurer
Room 47, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

Postmaster: Form 3547 requested.

Minutes
Executive Com. - C.C.H.S.
April 29, 1955



VOTED: That the Secretary be granted a discretionary allowance of \$100.00 for the current year, and that the budgetary allowance for meetings and travel be reduced by similar amount.

VOTED: That the plans in preparation for the Annual Meeting in Boston in early November, including the engaging of Prof. Roland Bainton, be approved.

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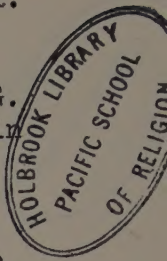
Summary of Financial Statement as of March 31, 1955
(subject to audit)

Adjusted balance - January 1, 1954	\$ 738.62
Receipts for three months	\$2120.00
Expenses (budget \$1562.50)	<u>1542.22</u>
Balance three months	<u>577.78</u>
Balance total	\$ 1316.40

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Meeting adjourned at 8:15 P.M.

Frederick L. Fagley
Secretary



The Secretary presented the correspondence with Col. Frederic G. Bauer, concerning use of the words The War Between the States in the Winter News Letter article. A note of correction for next News Letter was presented, and it was

VOTED: That the statement be approved with the addition of the words "The editor accepts responsibility for the wording as used in the News Letter."

There was a discussion of the program for Forefathers' Day, and it was

VOTED: That the responsibility for preparing Forefathers' Day copy of the News Letter be committed to Messrs. Penner, Fagley and Verne Morey with power. This to be mailed in late October with advance notice in Summer News Letter. It was suggested Quotes from the Fathers be used.

The Committee recessed for a short visit to the new home of Mr. and Mrs. Horton, 1 Lexington Avenue, where light refreshments were served and then went on to the National Arts Club for dinner.

The Secretary reported briefly with illustrative letters on:

- a) The development of the church anniversary program
- b) Some questions correspondents ask
- c) Development of State programs under a State Historian
- d) Letters requesting various types of assistance
- e) Helpful relationships with other denominational societies
- f) Expansion of influence of News Letter and preview of the Spring issue to be published next week.

There was a discussion of the annual August-September appeal to the churches and to individuals, and it was

VOTED: That Mr. Penner be requested to draft a short letter of invitation to churches and individuals to be mailed Sept. 15 with the following enclosures: Summer News Letter, subscription blank and return, addressed envelope; that for the News Letter the president, Mr. Bradford, be requested to write page 1 and Mr. Penner the top half of page 4.

VOTED: That Mr. Folwell, Helen Kenyon, Messrs. Penner and Bradford be asked to serve as budget committee for the Annual Meeting; the committee to meet at Lake Sunapee, N.H.

There was a discussion of financial support of the Society. It was noted that some contributors of the first quarter of 1954 had not renewed for 1955 and some earlier contributors also had not renewed, and it was

VOTED: To request Helen Kenyon to give these tardy contributors her personal attention. This request was accepted.

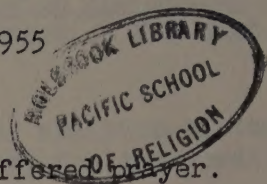
MINUTES

Meeting of Executive Committee

THE CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

New York

Friday, April 29, 1955



The Chairman called the meeting to order and offered prayer.

Present: Lucy Eldredge, Helen Kenyon, Mrs. Rounds,
Messrs. Bruce, Fagley, Lightbourne, Horton, Penner.

Regrets from Messrs. Folwell, Gill, Leiper, Scott, Simpson.

The Secretary reported on the follow-up of actions taken at the Annual Meeting, November 10th.

The Secretary presented copy of the report of the auditors, Messrs. Harold B. Belcher and Ralph E. Whitney, that the financial records had been carefully checked for the period from November 21, 1951 through December 31, 1954 and found in order, and the balance in bank \$931.34 as shown by the Treasurer's books.

VOTED: That the report of the auditors be received with sincere appreciation and the report be filed.

VOTED: That the Secretary be instructed to write Messrs. Belcher and Whitney in appreciation of their valued services.

Note: Helen Kenyon requests copy of Treasurer's Report for 1954 signed by the auditors.

The financial report for the months January to March was presented.

VOTED: That \$80.00 be assigned in budget for the Society's share of Social Security payments, and that the item for secretarial assistance be reduced by a like sum, and that staff compensation be reported on gross basis.

VOTED: That the payment to the Board of Home Missions for services as per bill of October 3, for \$192.72 (not cleared until after the close of the books for 1954) be charged against the reported balance of December 31, 1954 and not against the budget for 1955.

The Secretary reported on the project of interesting in the Society Congregational lay persons who are listed as such in Who's Who; 556 listed had been invited by mail, first on April 9, 1954 and again March 8, 1955, and that 38 contributions totaling \$220.00 had been received. It was

VOTED: That a third invitation to bent those not responding and that Mr. Horton be requested to write and to sign the letters. Mr. Horton being present accepted the duty. This third mailing to be sent as early in May as possible, and to include News Letter, subscription blank and return envelope.